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MB Docket 02-277  
01-235  
01-317  
00-244

Comments for FCC hearing at Duke University Law School 4/3/2003  
Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary

Ladies and Gentlemen, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Bill Willis and by trade I am a Ph.D. Engineer and an Information Technology executive with a global fortune 500 company. This being of little value this discussion, it is my avocation which qualifies me to speak with you today.

For most of my life I have been a committed musician and have performed many different types of music. My passion, however, is Bluegrass and for nearly 30 years I have spent a good portion of my discretionary time listening, playing, learning and teaching the music. North Carolina has a rich heritage of traditional music and it is a significant and important part of our local culture. The music that I love thrives here. In fact, one of our local, part-time bands has the number one song on the national Bluegrass charts this month.

The fact that the music thrives is not to be taken lightly. Nearly 20 years ago I was privileged to participate in the founding of an organization called the Piedmont Council for Traditional Music or PineCone. This not-for-profit organization is healthy today and presents programs and concerts in local schools and concert halls. There are a several such organizations in the area and they all contribute to the energy and presence of the music here.

One of the most important venues available to PineCone is a weekly 3-hour radio show on WQDR 94.7 which presents Bluegrass and other traditional music. The exposure that the music receives though presentation on a major radio station has been an important contributing factor to the health of the music. It provides an opportunity for a wide range of people to hear and enjoy the music and keeps us flush with young musicians who are energetic and creative.

I did a little research and there are about 20 traditional music programs on radio in the State. All of these programs are hosted on locally-owned stations or public radio. Stations owned by national media companies operate by formula which targets mass markets at a national level and they have little interest in the preferences and culture of local markets. I have no doubt that, without local ownership, we would not enjoy the diversity of music programming and that the music which now thrives would suffer.

I am here to ask you to help insure the diversity of programming and music by protecting locally owned stations. The diversity of programming that they provide is critical to the health of the music that I love and the local culture that surrounds it. Thank You...

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